

## Philippians 2:1-13 Let This Mind Be In You - Part 1

It is here that we see the real meaning of what some folks call the Golden Rule. “Do unto others, what you would have them do unto you”, Matthew 7:12. Yet we see over and over again that Jesus quote the Law, but then says, “but I show you a better way”, or “here is a deeper definition.” That is what Paul is writing here. A better or deeper definition of Matthew 7:12.

Paul begins by setting out some of the known characteristics of the Christian faith by stating them as an “If /Then” statement. He is making a point by show the church that these characteristics are a result of being a believer and therefore should be part of the everyday life of the believer. We are to be:

1. *Encouraging or consolation in Christ* – The encouragement and consolation in Christ is that He promises that “He will never leave us nor forsake us”, (Deut. 31:7-8) and that He will “not slumber nor sleep” while watching over us. (Ps. 121:4) We also know that “Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever.” (Heb. 13:8)
2. *Comforting and loving others* – We are to comfort and encourage each other (2 Cor. 13:11; 1 Thes. 4:18). Also we are to love each other (John 13:35; 1 John 4:20-21)
3. *Fellowshipping with others* – We need each other. It is with the help of each other that we survive and are fruitful (Heb 10:24-25; Eccl. 4:11; Matt 18:19)
4. *Affectionate and compassionate to others* – This goes beyond just knowing someone and speaking to them, it involves getting to really know them and taking an interest in their lives, their struggles, and their issues. (Gal 6:2; James 1:27)

Verse 2 tells us that Paul is asking the church to take all the characteristics just listed in verse one and apply them to their relationships and become what God intended them to become. Here again Paul talks about the joy he has with the church there. He is encouraging them to beware of the in-fighting that often occurs in churches and the problems that arise from being too selfish. Paul knew that it was only a matter of time before the church would go down a road it really didn't want to.

Make my joy complete – vs. 2 – Here we see Paul asking only for one thing to happen to have his “joy made complete by being of one mind.” Wow, you understand that Paul isn't asking for them to increase their numbers, or to increase their missions budget, or to start more Sunday School classes. He is only asking that they treat each other better. To be of one mind and become one group that is known for its love for each other. So here is how Paul tells the church to accomplish that.

Being of one or the same mind by:

1. **Maintaining the same love – vs 2** – What does Paul mean here by saying maintaining the same love? What love is he talking about? Why does he use the word maintain? And what does the word “same” mean here? All this is to answer where the church was spiritually. It was obvious to Paul that the church could not have the impact he wanted if the church was not together in its focus and purpose.
2. **United in spirit – vs 2** – How often have we told someone, “you just don’t have the same passion I do.” Or how about, “you will never understand my point of view.” Maybe you think someone can never be on the same page as you because they “are different than you.” It is vital for a group to be effective that everyone has the same understanding or calling to be cohesive group. One lone ranger can disrupt a group very easily. If you are not really part of a group that you think you are or want to be, check out your spirit and see if they are the same. That goes for groups at school, church, or even work. Who are you hanging around? Do your spirits have the same thoughts? Are they righteous thoughts?
3. **Intent on one purpose – vs 2** – Paul really hits all of our thinking here. First he wants us to be lovey – dovey, and then he wants us to all think alike and now he is asking us to all “do” alike. Purpose! What is your purpose and what is my purpose? How do I show that and how do I manifest that? What does it look like and why can’t I have mine and you have yours? Paul knew that if we all did things our own way, chaos would result. Haven’t you been in a group with no real purpose or focus? We have said many times that Hosea was right when he wrote 4:6 “my people perish or are destroyed, because of a lack of knowledge.” In fact, God says that we perish “because we have rejected knowledge.” That means we have heard it and decided not to accept it. Folks, that is a very dangerous place to be in your life. When you have heard the truth and not accepted it, you put yourself in a very special place that allows God to discipline you as He sees fit.

Now Paul goes from just teaching to really meddling. In verse 3 & 4 Paul begins the very basis upon which we build all of our relationships. Especially if we are to profess being a Godly Christian. We cannot ignore this part of scripture. We all might like to a one time or another. But the truth is that we can’t. There are 6 things we need to specifically look at here.

1. **Do nothing from selfish or empty conceit – Vs. 3a** – This is a mouthful. Here we are challenged to do nothing, and means nothing, that is done from selfish motives or from a selfish ego driven point of view. We also see that actions done from a “me” perspective is the same as doing them from a selfish conceit and those are empty. Even if you are doing good, it has no value in the sight of God. It is just empty.
2. **But with humility of mind – vs.3b** – Now we must stop here and first look at what Paul means by the word mind. What is involved in that word? What is the mind? Is

it just a part of the brain? Or is it a part of the psyche? What does it do and how does it affect what we do? Well, let's look at verse 5 for a moment. We are told to have the same "mind" as Christ did. That means we are to have the same attitude and behavior as Christ. WOW! That is a tall order. But it can be possible as we will see next week. But Paul says to we are to have "humility of mind." So what does that say about how we are to act toward others and in difficult situations?

3. **Let each of you – vs. 3c** – You know, this is where the bible really makes a big difference from the world's viewpoint. Paul says "each of you." That means "all of us." Everyone. No exceptions. To see what it is really saying, let's look at what it does not say. It doesn't say this applies to each of you unless you are rich or powerful, pretty, skinny, or even if you are the President. It says everyone. Period.
4. **Regard one another as more important than himself – vs. 3d** – Now the "himself" really applies to all of us. Remember the times in which Paul was writing. You know that really means that we are to put others ahead of ourselves, think about the needs of others before our own, do all those things your mother told you about like "be kind to others" and all that. It is interesting that Paul doesn't give any room for not doing this. There are no excuses. However, in real life it isn't that easy is it? It is difficult to put someone else's desires above our own; especially when we "feel" they don't deserve it. Or when someone has hurt or betrayed us. Or to that kid we just don't like. Paul is making a very important point here. The church was beginning to show signs of becoming selfish. It was demonstrating the characteristics of a church that was becoming "exclusive", over who was better, or who deserved a special honor, or a reward for something. There were petty jealousies among the members and the leaders, so Paul began this whole letter in order to help the church to get back on the right track.
5. **Don't just look out for yourself – vs. 4** – This is simple but very difficult. We just need to begin to think of others as much as we do ourselves. Jesus said it in His discourse about the greatest commandment. (Matt. 22:36-40)

Oswald Chambers says "Being a disciple means deliberately identifying yourself with God's interest in other people."

The true expression of Christian character is not in good-doing, but in God-likeness. If the Spirit of God has transformed you within, you will exhibit divine characteristics in your life, not just good human characteristics. "God's life in us expresses itself as God's life, not a human life trying to be godly."

In versus 5 – 11, Paul describes for us the true nature of who Jesus was and is and how Jesus was the ultimate example of humility and yet never denied or compromised His deity. Jesus Christ IS the example of how we should live. The first is a commandment that we have the same attitude as Jesus Christ had. Now that right there is a tall order and sets the stage for everything Christ did on this earth. So what does that attitude look like? What attitude did Jesus have that we should have? What are we doing that Jesus would never do? What did Jesus always do that we either never do or don't like doing?

These verses show us several things about Jesus Christ.

1. Christ has always existed with God - vs. 6 -
2. Christ is equal to God because he is God - vs. 6 - (John 1:1ff; Colossians 1:15-19)
3. Though Christ is God, he became a man in order to fulfill God's plan of salvation for all people - vs. 7 -
4. Christ did not just have the appearance of being a man—he actually became human to identify with our sins – vs. 7 -
5. Christ voluntarily laid aside his divine rights and privileges out of love for his Father – vs. 8 -
6. Christ died on the cross for our sins so we wouldn't have to face eternal death – vs. 8 -
7. God glorified Christ because of his obedience – vs. 9 -
8. God raised Christ to his original position at the Father's right hand, where he will reign forever as our Lord and Judge – vs. 10-11

Verses 12 – 18 - Paul uses this opportunity to challenge the church in the next process in the Christian life. In fact this is probably the most difficult and most demanding part of our Christian walk. It is fairly easy to walk the aisle and shake the pastors hand and say, "I want to be saved." It doesn't take too much courage to tell a friend, "I want to be a Christian." But boy does it take a lot of effort, sacrifice, struggle, challenge, and just plain guts sometimes to live a Christian life. So Paul is telling the church how to do that here.

1. We must obey God – vs. 12 – Paul commends the church on their obedience, but challenges them to not only obey while he was with them but also while he was away. This is our challenge too. It is easy to be on fire for God and make all kinds of commitment while we are at Passion or Confluence, or during some Christian concert. But what about when you are alone and no one is watching you and the temptations come? Paul says it is as important or even more

important that they obey when he wasn't there.

2. Work out your salvation – vs. 12b – This is one of the most confusing statements in the whole Bible if you just look at the words and not the entire context of the verse. It can be a point of division or misleading, but it is really meant to be a point of encouragement. Here is what some folks think it means.
  - i. We need to do something to complete our salvation
  - ii. We are required to continue to do God's work for our salvation to continue
  - iii. There are things we have to do for God to accept us
  - iv. Work is a part of the salvation experience

Let me make this simple for you. To work out our salvation really means, ***“since you are saved, act like it! And do so because other are depending on you to show them the way.”*** So many times we are just Christians in name only and not in our behavior. It is our responsibility to do what is required as believers to be different than the world and to show it through our everyday actions.

3. For it is God – vs. 13a – I love that this verse follows one of the most challenging verses. Verse 12 clearly states a very difficult and almost impossible task for us, but here Paul tells us how we can do it. Very simply, “it is God.” Not us, but God that has the ability and power to make us “work out our salvation.”
4. Who is at work in you – vs. 13b – You know sometimes I just need someone else to tell me what to do, and sometimes I just need someone else to do it for me. Here we see that God is at work in us, and He is always looking to create opportunities for us to obey and do what is right. It is God, not our power or desire, but His.